

PLATE XXXVIII.—THE WYCH ELM AT BAGOT'S MILL.

This tree is more distinguished by its beauty than its size. The spot in which it stands abounding in rural objects, each one connected with another in harmony and fitness, forms one of the scenes which it is impossible for a lover of nature to behold without pausing to admire, and which irresistibly appeal to the pencil of the artist. It is in such situations as these that an insulated tree inspires reflections peculiarly pleasing. It seems the common property of all who raise their humble tenements within sight of its branches. It is one of the delightful ornaments of nature that the poorest cottager may enjoy and be proud of. He loves to see the stranger stop to gaze at it, and derives a pleasure from his admiration, which, though he can scarcely trace it to any definite source, is yet perhaps as great and surely more pure than that which is felt by the owner of large domains who sees the woods that were planted by his ancestors prostrated beneath the axe, to satisfy the demands of some scheme of luxury or ambition.

PLATE XXXIX.—ELM AT CHECQUERS.

This venerable tree, in all probability the most ancient Elm in England, stands on the manor of Checquers, in Ellesborough in Buckinghamshire, so called from one of its ancient lords, John de Scaccariis, or of the Exchequer, from whose family it passed to the Hawtreys, and from the Hawtreys to a younger branch of the Crokes, by whom it finally came into the possession of the family of its present owner, William Greenhill Russell, Esq.

"The old mansion called Checquers," says Lysons in his History of Buckinghamshire, "situated in a very romantic spot, amidst hills covered with beech and other trees, was built by the Hawtreys, whose arms are in the hall windows. In this house there are some good family portraits, among which are Oliver Cromwell, from whom the Russells were lineally descended, Lady Claypole, and other persons connected with the family." Close to this antique mansion stands, a fit companion to the scene, the venerable Elm, which, according to the traditional accounts in the family, handed down, as we are informed by its present possessor, through successive ages, was planted in the reign of Stephen—a most extraordinary instance of longevity in a tree, whose usual age has not been considered by any means to equal that of the Oak or Chesnut. It is now fast approaching to its last stage of decay; yet its enormous trunk, though hollowed into an absolute shell, displays in a circumference of thirty-one feet, sufficient remains of grandeur to denote the magnificent object it must have exhibited in its prime.

PLATE XL.—MAPLE IN BOLDRE CHURCH-YARD.

The small or common Maple is very inferior in size to the Sycamore, or greater Maple; but the timber is much more valuable, and is held in the highest estimation by turners and cabinet-makers, on account of the exquisite beauty of veining which it frequently presents. The wood of the Maple is also much prized for musical instruments, on account of its lightness; and the tree itself yields a sap which upon evaporation will leave sugar as perfect in quality as that of the cane, though inferior in point of quantity. The ancients held the Maple in the greatest esteem; and tables inlaid with curious portions of it, or formed entirely of its wood when finely variegated, fetched prices which, even to the manufacturers of the bull furniture of modern times, would appear unconscionable and incredible. Virgil erects his throne for "the good Evander" of Maple, inlaid with ivory; and Pliny gives an elaborate account of its properties and value. The Maple, so common in hedges, seldom attains any considerable size as a forest tree. The Maple in Boldre Church-yard is ten feet in circumference at the ground, and at four feet, seven feet six inches; at twelve, the trunk divides into branches; and the entire height of the tree is about forty-five feet. This is considered the largest maple in England, and is mentioned as such by Gilpin in his remarks on "Forest Scenery."